Report on Nixon Homes Hit

3/23/74

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A House subcommittee report charging that the government has spent $17 million on President Nixon's private homes was denounced yesterday as "absolutely untrue" by the subcommittee's ranking Republican, Rep. John Buchanan of Alabama.

Buchanan charged Government Operations Subcommittee Democrats with conducting "the worst political witch-hunt that I have seen in all my time in Congress." He called the report's findings "baseless" and full of distortions.

He denied the report's charge that the money was "loosely spent" and said a General Accounting Office investigation published in December concluded that less than $70,000 worth of expenditures on the President's homes were even questionable.

The White House, which had earlier called the report a deliberate deception, denounced it again yesterday.

Deputy press secretary Gerald Warren said the report and news accounts based on it were "not in perspective.

"I suppose if the President of the United States never left the White House" the money would not have been spent, Warren said.

He added, "I think the American people would not expect the President to make a prisoner of himself in the White House.

"I do not think the American people expect the President to stay in the White House 365 days a year."

Buchanan said the $17 million figure used in the report was a distortion because it adds $7.1 million for military and civilian personnel salaries over five years to the $9.9 million spent for facilities.

"When details of government expenditures were made public in August, 1973, . . . it was explicitly pointed out that the costs of personnel were not included," Buchannan said.

He said personnel costs were not included because of "the difficulty in separating incremental support personnel from those who would be needed to protect the President regardless of his private homes, and because "indicating the personal support used to protect the President" would raise "additional security problems."

Buchanan added that only $1.2 million has been spent directly on the President's homes and property "and all of that is for the protection of the President."

He disputed the report's charge that the expenditures added to the value of the properties. "The GAO study concludes that 95 per cent of all government expenditures on the homes and properties were of only incidental value to the President and that some, such as bullet-resistant glass at Key Biscayne—the largest expenditure on his home there—actually detracted from the value of the properties."

The subcommittee report, the result of an investigation and hearings held last year, was adopted Thursday on a straight party-line vote over the objections of the Republicans. It concluded that the Secret Service and the General Services Administration "abused" their discretion to spend public funds.

It cited an "alarming increase" in spending tax dollars on presidential private property and concluded. "The primary cause of such an increase is the absence of any self-restraint on the part of the current administration."